

SHAPING OUR CULTURAL FUTURE



CONVERSATIONS ACROSS MICHIGAN

A REPORT TO THE MICHIGAN COUNCIL FOR ARTS
AND CULTURAL AFFAIRS
JULY 2002

SHAPING OUR CULTURAL FUTURE: CONVERSATIONS ACROSS MICHIGAN

A REPORT TO THE MICHIGAN COUNCIL FOR ARTS AND
CULTURAL AFFAIRS

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NATIONAL
ENDOWMENT
FOR THE ARTS

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Shaping Our Cultural Future: Conversations Across Michigan

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michigan council for
arts and cultural affairs

SHAPING OUR CULTURAL FUTURE: CONVERSATIONS ACROSS MICHIGAN

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

From October 2001 through May 2002 the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs (MCACA), a division of the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries, engaged in a project to discover the hopes, dreams and aspirations of Michigan citizens for the future of arts and culture in the State of Michigan. In a series of facilitated *Community Conversations*, personal and collective visions for the ways art and culture can impact life in our communities and state were gathered and documented. Consistent across all communities was the idea that arts and culture, integrated fully in community life, has the potential to catalyze economic and community renewal while connecting people across social, ethnic and geographic boundaries.

A cross-section of Michigan citizens from every region of the state participated in the dialogue. Facilitated *Community Conversations* were held in thirteen communities in both the Lower and Upper Peninsula and with attendees at the MCACA 2001 Fall Conference, "Shaping Michigan's Cultural Future." The *Community Conversations* involved over 500 citizens representing government, education, business, human services, libraries, artists and arts organizations from urban, rural and suburban communities in every region of the state.

"Culture is a national resource, the accumulated capital of America's ingenuity and creativity. It is the store of human achievement and memory as well as the font of creativity and innovation."

**Center for
Arts and
Culture**

A Shared Vision of Economic Renaissance and Community Reconnection

Participants in each visioning session were asked to respond to two questions:

1. How can arts and culture contribute the quality of life in your region?
2. What would you like to see in place ten years from now that would demonstrate that your hopes and dreams for arts and culture have become reality in your community?

Participants were instructed to focus on concrete examples that they could actually envision becoming reality under the right conditions, rather than on ‘pie in the sky’ dreams that would seem completely unrealistic. This produced elements of a practical vision, shared by a diverse cross-section of Michigan’s citizens from communities large and small. It is a vision that stretches the imagination, but is grounded in a sense of reality about ways the state’s cultural resources can enhance the quality of living for all citizens.

Four common themes describing participants’ visions for the enhancement of life in Michigan through arts and culture emerged from the sessions. Although each community identified variations on these themes, a remarkable consistency of ideas across every community and every sector of the population was clear.

Michigan’s citizens envision:

- ...cultural institutions and organizations generating economic value, having a positive impact on local and state economies, and creating economic opportunity for individual artists and related professionals.
- ...thriving arts and cultural institutions, facilities and activities that build community infrastructure and social connections.
- ...broad-based public awareness of, access to, and participation in artistic and cultural activity that celebrates Michigan’s heritage and diversity.
- ...integration of arts and the creative process in the formal education of youth and in lifelong learning for all citizens.

Strategic Opportunity for Arts and Culture

Participants next identified related areas of opportunity that they believed would move their region and the state toward one or more pieces of the vision becoming reality. Responses can be organized into four general areas of opportunity including:

1. Restore, preserve, update and develop facilities for community arts that benefit neighborhoods, business districts and education while providing access to arts for citizens from all segments of the community.
2. Initiate and build strategic partnerships between cultural organizations and community, education and economic development organizations, and strengthen collaboration among cultural organizations on both a regional and topical basis.
3. Develop diversified funding streams on the local and state levels to sustain widely accessible cultural opportunities throughout Michigan and to anchor the potential of arts and cultural institutions in the larger economic engine of the state.
4. Implement a strategic initiative to create public awareness of the existing and potential economic, social, educational and community value of cultural activities and institutions.

About This Project

The *Shaping Michigan's Cultural Future – Community Conversations* project was conducted by Traverse Management Resources, Inc. for the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs to engage a cross-section of Michigan's citizens in a dialogue about how Michigan's cultural capital can contribute to the quality of living in their communities, regions and the state. Many of 271 registered attendees at the MCACA Fall Conference and over 250 individuals representing 83 communities participated in one of twenty-one individually facilitated visioning sessions.

The visioning sessions were approximately three hours in length. A facilitated participatory process was used to gain broad agreement on the elements of a future vision in each region. Each region received a summary report for use in regional, community or organizational planning related to arts and culture. It is the hope of the MCACA that this will be the first step in ongoing community conversations, collaboration and planning, and that it will serve as the cornerstone of a statewide cultural plan for the next decade.

RENAISSANCE AND RECONNECTION: VARIATIONS ON A THEME

Consistent across all communities was the idea that arts and culture, integrated fully in community life, has the potential to create an economic and community renewal while connecting people across social, ethnic and geographic boundaries. Many unique and highly individualized ideas for ways arts and cultural resources could enhance life were advanced in the *Community Conversations*. Even with localized responses, the ideas clearly fell into the four general themes, with variations, that follow.

1. Arts and Culture Creating Economic Value and Opportunity

We Envision: Cultural institutions and organizations generating economic value, having a positive impact on local and state economies, and creating economic opportunity for individual artists and related professionals.

Culture as the Catalyst

Consistent in every location, regardless of community size or demographic makeup was the vision that arts and culture will serve as a catalyst for economic development. In both urban and rural areas participants envisioned the renewal of decaying downtowns and business districts by redeveloping and adapting decaying buildings as cultural centers, spaces for artists to create and sell their work, galleries, theatres and other venues. By developing economic centers around cultural activity, citizens imagined the further development of retail, housing and restaurants in these areas, marketing an appreciation for local products and culture, and attracting ‘cultural tourists’.

My dream is for...

“Construction of the Center for Arts and Education in downtown Lansing as a cornerstone of cultural life and downtown regeneration...”

George, Lansing

In rural communities the vision often centered on preserving unique or historic buildings to create or revive commerce and to promote appreciation of regional culture. In many communities the need revolved around creating support facilities, such as campgrounds and hotels, to enable regional participation and cultural tourism. Citizens from almost every community could imagine their location as a destination for cultural tourism.

Artists as Entrepreneurs

Developing the capacity of artists and arts organizations to create and operate small businesses was seen as key to a thriving cultural sector in which artistic and cultural pursuits are viewed as viable professions, with opportunities for ‘artists’ to earn professional salaries, and by developing their ability to create and operate small businesses. Visions of a thriving artistic sector bringing value to a community through the adaptive reuse of buildings, and by providing affordable space for artists to work, live and present their works to the public were evident across the state.

Culture in Community Planning

Across all communities, but particularly in urban and metropolitan areas, participants felt strongly that leaders of cultural organizations should play a central role in local government and planning initiatives. Participants envisioned comprehensive community or regional cultural plans as a key component of long range master plans and strategic economic and community development plans. Ultimately, participants want to see cultural leadership integrated as a vital partner in local, regional and state government and business decision-making processes.

“The 2002 economic impact study, Arts & Economic Prosperity, provides compelling new evidence that the nonprofit arts are a significant industry in the United States – generating \$53.2 billion in spending by nonprofit arts organizations and an additional \$80.8 billion in event-related spending by their audiences. The industry supports 4.9 million jobs and delivers more than \$23 billion in total government revenue.”

Americans for the Arts 2002

2. Thriving Cultural Institutions and Communities

We Envision: Building on existing structures and resources to create thriving cultural institutions, facilities and activities that develop community infrastructure and social connections among citizens.

Cultural Facilities as Focal Points

Participants envisioned a wide range of facilities providing focal points for business generation, galleries and performance venues, artist studios, and community classes and social gatherings. In many locations, participants focused on reusing and enhancing existing structures through renovation or preservation. Participants described a growing need to rehabilitate structures that were built in the 1960's, and to maintain quality museums and libraries. In others, citizens envisioned new facilities providing opportunity where none had existed before or to accommodate growing needs.

By providing a variety of quality, multi-functional spaces, participants imagined a future with greatly expanded access to and participation in cultural activity as well as strengthened community infrastructure that attracts and retains quality businesses and their employees. In some urban and suburban areas, participants envisioned art and artists having a visible role in community design, creating and presenting community character through all its public places.

“A number of cultural facilities have been built in strategic locations, as a major factor in the transformation of moribund downtowns, obsolete factory districts, and disregarded waterfronts. Throughout the country, in cities large and small, such projects have been undertaken as a means of bringing life – an economic impulse – to areas that are too often deserted after business hours or that have been abandoned altogether.”

Center for Arts and Culture 2001

Powerful Collaboration

Participants expressed universal enthusiasm for the concept of meaningful collaboration within the cultural sector as well as with organizations serving the social, educational and economic needs of communities. Although the current levels of cooperation and collaboration vary greatly across the state, all regions expressed desire to work together and with an increasing variety of organizations at higher levels.

In areas where cultural organizations have a successful history of working together, collaboration around excellence in management is envisioned including such ideas as cooperative administration, health insurance and benefits, and shared space and personnel. In more isolated regions, participants envision collaborating to leverage limited resources, attract volunteers, and share ideas in regular forums.

Diversified Funding

The need to develop empowering, sustainable funding streams for artistic and cultural development and activity was emphasized in each of the thirteen *Community Conversations* as a foundational issue that must be addressed to sustain progress and unleash the true potential of culture to enhance life in Michigan. A number of strategies were suggested, all involving partnerships with both private and public sectors, to accomplish mutually beneficial goals.

Partnering with the private sector to establish endowments and secure resources was suggested at every meeting. Partnering with local, county and state governments was also seen as key to future financial capacity and stability for cultural organizations. Participants envisioned funding for arts and cultural endeavors equal to the value they create for a community, region and the state.

My dream is for...

***“...dependable
stable funding
that recognizes
the human capital
involved in a
vibrant cultural
community – all
the elements
which work
together to create
a unique
product...”***

Anne, Kalamazoo

3. Public Awareness, Access and Participation

We Envision: Broad-based public awareness of, access to, and participation in artistic and cultural activity will develop appreciation for Michigan's heritage and diversity and that will stimulate economic, community and social development.

Creating Community Identity and Pride

In the 2001 issue paper, *Strengthening Communities Through Culture*, the national not-for-profit Center for Arts and Culture states, "The term 'art and culture' encompasses all creative expressions – in support, or in opposition to, a nation's or a community's flavor and essence, that ally it with and distinguish it from other nations or communities – that can be read, heard, viewed, and/or participated in." Participants in Michigan's visioning process felt strongly that broad-based access to, and participation in cultural activity was central to preserving the state's multi-cultural heritage, to appreciating its diversity, and to developing and maintaining the unique local identity of its communities.

Participants envisioned strengthening a sense of community identity and pride by increasing availability of art in public places, programming to promote cross-cultural connections, highlighting local history and heritage, and supporting the ongoing generation of new works. This theme has hundreds of local variations -- from the Upper Peninsula community that wants to pass on its Finnish traditions to the next generation to the Detroit neighborhood that wants to celebrate diversity of thought and vision through organic expression and creative freedom in neighborhood libraries, schools, churches and arts centers.

My dream is for...

"...art and culture to be a reflection of my community; its values, beliefs and traditions. The rich history and customs of Native Americans has yet to be explored."

Russell, Detroit

Public Awareness and Recognition

Participants across the state envisioned a future where arts and culture are perceived as valuable to all citizens in both tangible and intangible ways. Top-of-mind awareness of cultural resources and opportunities that are available in a community was identified as key to realizing the full economic and social potential these assets bring to citizens, communities and the state. Participants imagined growing and diversifying audiences, increasing and broadening participation, and developing public and private support. Elevating the status of and communicating the importance of culture in community life was viewed as essential to a thriving future.

Barrier-Busting Social Impact

Participants across the state recognized that arts and culture have the potential to help communities address social problems and to build bridges between individuals and groups. Participants envisioned outreach to rural and isolated populations, facilities where the people are, affordable admissions and informal opportunities for participation as vital components of community life in the future. Participants in every *Community Conversation* envisioned collaboration with social service agencies, neighborhood associations and other community institutions and organizations that will foster understanding, will increase understanding among diverse populations and will help to catalyze communication between all the people in a community.

***“Local decision-makers are discovering that supporting an arts program is more productive and less costly than adding officers to the police force.”
(Mulcahy 2000)***

Center for Arts and Culture

4. Lifelong Learning

We Envision: Arts and the creative process integrated in the formal education of youth and in lifelong learning for all citizens.

In K-12 Education Systems

The enormous impact of arts and culture on young people and learning was recognized at every visioning session and by participants from communities of all sizes. Integrating learning about arts and culture and infusing arts in the process of learning all subjects were seen as equally important and valuable. Funding for arts in education was seen as inequitable across the state and undervalued for its impact on learning.

A majority of participants expressed the desire that art education be recognized and evaluated as a component of Michigan's Core Curriculum. Concurrently, qualified teachers should be available in every school. Concern over the disparities in access to arts education depending on the individual school environment was widespread. Inequity in access to arts education was seen as having an impact on overall achievement, learning and opportunity over a lifetime for many young people.

In addition to arts and culture as subject matter, the infusion of arts processes and experiences into the learning process for all subjects was seen as perhaps having even greater value in the education of Michigan's young people. A range of ideas were advanced to use arts as a tool for learning, especially for children who do not learn easily with traditional methods. Artist in residence, mentoring programs and concrete links to careers are program ideas suggested in multiple locations.

“According to an eight-year longitudinal study of 25,000 middle school students, those with high levels of arts involvement in both the highest and lowest socioeconomic quintile have significantly higher standardized test scores and lower dropout rates than those with low levels of arts involvement.” (Catterall 1998)

**Center for Arts
and Culture 2001**

In Lifelong Learning Systems

Creative opportunities to experience arts in learning beyond the formal K-12 education system were desired across the state. Many citizens share a vision of integrating opportunities to experience arts, culture and creative expression for all citizens in a community over a lifetime. Arts agencies and both formal and informal social organizations are viewed as vehicles for providing lifelong learning opportunities through the artistic and cultural experience. Ideas ranged from providing summer camps and programs for youth and adults to working with community colleges to provide adult programming. Partnering between arts organizations and nursing homes, hospitals, and agencies providing services to at-risk youth and aging populations can provide a wealth of opportunity to enhance the quality of living for all citizens.

My dream is for...

“a place where creativity and creative action is celebrated, engendered and organized – cradle to grave activity occurring on all sectors of the community...”

Shaun, Detroit

PURSUING THE VISION: A STRATEGIC OPPORTUNITY

When asked to describe concrete, specific ideas that would demonstrate movement toward their visions, attendees generated a wealth of ideas. Participants identified areas of opportunity that they believe would move their region and the state toward one or more pieces of the vision becoming reality. Responses can be organized into four general areas of opportunity with a range of potential tactics for implementation in each that reflect the unique nature of each community and region. The four areas are:

- 1. Strategic Facility Investments*
- 2. Multi-Sector Partnering*
- 3. Diversification of Funding*
- 4. Creating Public Awareness*

Examples of communities, arts organizations, artists and everyday citizens that have implemented projects in each of these areas are evident across the state. Learning from, and building on these success stories is a concept with widespread support.

Strategic Facility Investments

Restore, preserve, update and develop facilities for community arts that benefit neighborhoods, business districts and education while providing access to arts for citizens from all segments of the community.

A Sampling of Ideas

- Redevelopment of the Bay City waterfront
- An outdoor pavilion, motel and campground in Covington
- Using existing structures to create neighborhood ‘creativity centers’ in Detroit
- Downtown Flint as a center for arts and cultural opportunities with a renovated Capitol Theatre, restaurants, galleries and loft apartments
- An arts center in Gaylord where families can stay overnight
- A performing arts center with an attached school in downtown Grand Rapids
- Arts and education centers making downtown Lansing the ‘hot spot’ to live and to be

The Northport Community Arts Center

Over \$1,000,000 was raised by donations in this village of about 600 and township of 2100 residents to build a state-of-the-art performance facility attached to the Northport School. A citizens Board of Directors and volunteers handles programming, operation and maintenance, which is supported by a fully funded endowment. The nineteen event inaugural season has been a sellout and attracted visitors from across the Midwest.

Multi-Sector Partnering

Initiate and build strategic partnerships between cultural organizations and community, education and economic development organizations, and strengthen collaboration among cultural organizations on both a regional and topical basis.

A Sampling of Ideas

- A new, self-supporting Alger Area Arts Council in Munising
- Quarterly arts forums in Lansing
- Artists in residence at businesses and a corporate curator in Kalamazoo
- A cultural activities web site and communications center in Holland
- The Arts Alliance as an equal economic partner and force county-wide in Ann Arbor
- Standard signs for arts and cultural sites throughout Michigan
- Multi-disciplinary artists sharing space in Detroit
- A Cultural Affairs position in City government in Traverse City

The Epic Center of Kalamazoo

The Kalamazoo area benefits from a long history of collaboration and philanthropic investment in the region's quality of life. Under the leadership of the Kalamazoo Area Arts Council, a Community Cultural Plan was developed that called for shared, central space providing access downtown. With support from local foundations, the National Endowment for the Arts, a capital improvement grant from the State of Michigan and corporate and citizen donations, the Epic Center was born. The former department store was renovated and now houses offices, galleries, performance space, studios and classrooms.

Diversification of Funding

Develop diversified funding streams on the local and state levels to sustain widely accessible cultural opportunities throughout Michigan and to anchor the potential of arts and cultural institutions in the larger economic engine of the state.

A Sampling of Ideas

- More arts in architecture – designate a percentage of budget in public projects for art in Holland
- A county-wide millage for arts and culture in Ann Arbor
- Merchandising arts and creative ideas in Detroit
- Redistribution of grant funding in Detroit
- Art galleries in Gaylord generating new dollars
- Tourism taxes allocated to arts and culture in Grand Rapids
- A community cultural endowment fund in Lansing
- Cooperatives for financial and ‘sweat’ equity in Munising
- Partial government funding for capital projects for cultural organizations in Traverse City.

William Bonifas Fine Arts Center

This Arts Center has gone from deficit spending in 1995 to operating ‘in the black’ due to its diversified funding strategies and efficient use of resources. The Center benefits from budget appropriations from the Cities of Escanaba and Gladstone, Delta County, and the Hannahville Indian Community. The Center receives contributions from the Community Foundation, MCACA and other grant-makers. Numerous ‘Corporate Friends’ sponsor events and make annual contributions along with individual donors. The Center raises revenue from investments, facility rental, events, classes and workshops. In-kind contributions round out this successful funding strategy that has led to financial stability for the past five years.

Creating Public Awareness

Implement a strategic initiative to create public awareness of the existing and potential economic, social, educational and community value of cultural activities and institutions.

A Sampling of Ideas

- Outdoor sculptures, exhibits, and non-traditional displays and venues like busses, buildings and parks.
- Consistent media coverage of culture through newspapers, television and radio
- Public awards programs
- Transportation to and from outlying areas in rural Michigan and for neighborhood residents in cities
- Indigenous and imported arts in the Keweenaw Peninsula
- A children's garden in Detroit
- Music, drawing, sculpting clubs in Flint

Arts Alliance of the Ann Arbor Area

In 2001 the Ann Arbor Area Chamber of Commerce created a new division, the Arts Alliance of the Ann Arbor Area (A5) to bring together the arts and business communities to ensure that all area citizens benefit from the region's outstanding cultural resources. In partnership with the Ann Arbor Area Convention and Visitor's Bureau, the Ann Arbor Community Foundation and Nonprofit Enterprise at Work, A5 has recently launched an interactive web site to promote cultural events and attractions.

PARTICIPATION AND PROCESS

The *Shaping Michigan's Cultural Future – Community Conversations* project was conducted by Traverse Management Resources, Inc. for the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs to engage a cross-section of Michigan's citizens in a dialogue about how Michigan's cultural capital can contribute to the quality of living in their communities, regions and the state.

Project Goals

1. To gather input from a broad cross-section of Michigan citizens as input and context for future planning by the Michigan Council for Arts and Cultural Affairs and the Michigan Department of History, Arts and Libraries.
2. To hear from citizens from **all walks of life and from all regions** of the state about two main questions:
 1. *How can our state's cultural resources improve the quality of life and contribute to the economy in our state?*
 2. *And, on a personal level, what do you want from your cultural environment in the future?*

Project Objectives

- Produce a report summarizing input from each regional *Community Conversation* and make available to Event Co-Sponsors and participants.
- Produce a comprehensive summary report of all regional *Community Conversations* and provide to MCACA and Department of History, Art and Libraries.
- Provide an opportunity for citizens to experience a sense of excitement, enjoyment and ownership in the future of arts and culture across the State of Michigan.

- Identify and document individual and shared visions for future arts and cultural experiences that are viewed as important to their communities, regions and the State.
- Stimulate community participation, dialogue and leadership related to arts and cultural activity.
- Understand the ideas and input of both traditional and non-traditional arts and culture stakeholders.
- Develop a broad understanding of the priorities and interests of typically under-represented audiences as well as actively involved artists, patrons and citizens.

Participation

Many of 271 registered attendees at the MCACA Fall Conference and over 250 individuals representing 83 communities participated in one of twenty-one individually facilitated visioning sessions. The visioning sessions were approximately three hours in length. A facilitated participatory process was used to gain broad consensus on the elements of a future vision in each region. Each region received a summary report for use in regional, community or organizational planning related to arts and culture.

Communities Represented (83)

- | | |
|------------------|-------------------|
| 1. Ada | 12. Brighton |
| 2. Adrian | 13. Brimley |
| 3. Alden | 14. Cadillac |
| 4. Ann Arbor | 15. Calumet |
| 5. Au Gres | 16. Channing |
| 6. Bancroft | 17. Cheboygan |
| 7. Bay City | 18. Chelsea |
| 8. Belmont | 19. Covington |
| 9. Benton Harbor | 20. Crystal Falls |
| 10. Blissfield | 21. Detroit |
| 11. Boyne City | 22. Douglas |

23. Eagle Harbor
 24. East Jordan
 25. East Lansing
 26. Empire
 27. Escanaba
 28. Farmington Hills
 29. Flint
 30. Flushing
 31. Frankenmuth
 32. Gaylord
 33. Grand Blanc
 34. Grand Rapids
 35. Grosse Pointe Park
 36. Hancock
 37. Haslett
 38. Hastings
 39. Highland Park
 40. Holland
 41. Holly
 42. Howell
 43. Interlochen
 44. Iron Mountain
 45. Iron River
 46. Kalamazoo
 47. Kalkaska
 48. L'Anse
 49. Lansing
 50. Leland
 51. Ludington
 52. Manistique
 53. Marquette

54. Mesick
 55. Midland
 56. Mio
 57. Mt. Morris
 58. Munising
 59. Muskegon
 60. Northport
 61. Ovid
 62. Plymouth
 63. Portage
 64. Prudenville
 65. Rockford
 66. Roscommon
 67. Rudyard
 68. Saginaw
 69. Saline
 70. Saugatuck
 71. Sault St. Marie
 72. Shingleton
 73. South Haven
 74. St. Ignace
 75. St. Joseph
 76. Standish
 77. Traverse City
 78. Trenary
 79. Watton
 80. West Branch
 81. Wetmore
 82. Williamsburg
 83. Zeeland

253 Registered Participants at Community Conversations

Sector	Percent of Participants
Arts Industry	36%
Arts Patron	5%
Business	19%
Citizen	19%
Education	15%
Government	6%

271 Registered Fall Conference Participants